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VENDORS.

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Reprint from Journal of American Medical
Association, Nov. 20th, 1886.



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If aught were asked for as to further proof of the widespread extent of opium addiction in this country, it could easily be given by citing the number of individuals engaged in vending the various nostrums, each of which, it is asserted, has the only true claim to merit as the one genuine, sovereign cure for this phase of human ill.

It is now about eighteen years since an illiterate bricklayer in a Western city—who made some pretensions to the healing art by virtue of a small stock of herbs stored in a little back apartment—was struck with the shrewd idea that in this peculiar field lay a mine which, perchance, might be worked to no little pecuniary profit. Acting on this impulse, the opiate mixture was compounded, advertising circulars vaunting the nostrum made their appearance, the aid of the press was secured, and business began. It grew apace, and the coffers of its enterprising projector expanded as the circle of



his deluded victims widened, in their costly but luckless efforts for relief.

It was not to be expected that this genius would long be permitted to enjoy the monopoly of such a stroke of fortune, and so, ere many moons had waned, claimants for like honors put in an appearance—the rivalry between them being measured by extent of their pecuniary resources and fertility of advertising device. It proved a fatal attraction to more than one who had begun a legitimate medical career, and had taken obligations, binding as an oath could make them, to do right by their suffering fellows; but who ignored both personal and professional pledges in their greed for gold, and betook themselves to the camp of the common charlatan.

The reason is soon told. In every walk of professional life can be found those who, forgetful of duty, prove faithless to the right. Again, it seems an easy task to secure the aid of some portion of the press, both secular and religious, in furthering schemes of this sort; and, in one case of this kind, several medical journals, misled by the previous good repute of an individual who had allied himself with this disreputable band, placed their pages at command of a small fraternity engaged in furthering his scheme. To their credit be it said, however, that on being made aware of the situation, they promptly refused further publicity and, with two or three exceptions, editorially avowed their unintentional complicity, and thus freed themselves from the stain that threatened to smirch their journalistic apparel.

Another reason—and this, probably, the strongest—is the peculiar nature of this dis-

order, which impels its subjects to court privacy, and in every way secure themselves from public gaze. This feeling, which is largely the outcome of that mistaken opinion held by the laity—and, strange to say, some in the profession as well—that those who by force of necessity quite beyond control, have become victims to opium, are simply the slaves of a vicious indulgence, deserving censure rather than charity: this feeling, we say, is the main cause of that desire for secrecy on the part of the patient so essential to the charlatan in this special field, and of which he cunningly takes advantage to his own financial good. In hope of escape, the habitu  often spends much of both time and treasure to no purpose; and after months—or years, it may be—realizing it futile, he abandons further effort and berates himself for his folly; yet finds some consolation in the thought that no one else is aware of the course he has been pursuing. Proof of this fact is not needed, yet it may be noted one of these nostrum circulars is before the writer in which, among several asserted claims to special merit, is “absolute secrecy, even from nearest and dearest friends or relatives!”

It really is surprising that men of more than average intelligence, some of our own fraternity—again and again we have known such—will consign themselves to such keeping. Case after case has been under our care in which months and years of time, and hundreds of dollars have been expended on these nostrums without good. In many instances, doubtless, ignorance as to the make-up of these mixtures leads to their purchase, yet it would seem that every well-educated physician should be aware

of their nature. Such, however, is not the fact; and so, with the hope that the reports given in this paper may be accorded as wide publicity as their value demands, let it here suffice to say that, while great advance has been made in the knowledge of drugs and their uses, no agent has yet been discovered that will fully take the place of opium when once the system has become habituated to its use, and any individual making an assertion to the contrary may be safely set down as a knave or a fool.

Some time ago, the writer was requested by the editor of a well-known journal to prepare this exposé, and not long after, a letter was received from the gentleman who has made the main report here given, stating that he had been instructed by the State Board of Health to examine as many specimens of "opium antidotes" as could be secured, and asking my aid in making the list as large as possible. The result is appended, making, it is thought, the most extensive yet presented, and one which should suffice to convince every reader, who may have had any doubt, as to the true nature of these nostrums, and the "ways that are dark" of their vendors.

Before given details, it may be of interest to note the *modus operandi* of these individuals. In every instance, an accurate statement as to the daily or weekly amount of opium or its equivalent used, is an absolute essential in their so-called treatment. As one says: "Be especially careful to determine accurately *how much* of the drug you use in twenty-four hours, or in every seven days, if preferred." The time of taking, "at what hours," is another point de-

sired, and these being given, it is quite easy to prepare the mixture of such opiate strength as will give a certain amount of the habitual narcotic in each prescribed dose—the amount being exactly that of the previous taking. This done, the habitu   is simply continuing his addiction under a new name, and care having been taken that the opiate shall be quite enough for his need, he trudges along, hugging the delusive hope that, in no very long time, he will reach his wished-for goal. The initial amount of the nostrum supplied is intended for one month's using. Then, the patient having becoming accustomed, it is supposed, to this new order of things, another supply is given for a similar period, differing from the first only in that the amount of opium is lessened with each succeeding month, and so the play goes on, until the patient failing in his effort, becomes distrustful and betakes himself to some other specimen of the same genus, or else abandons the whole affair. The price per month of the nostrum depends mainly, of course, on the amount of opium it contains. Supposing an habitu   to be taking one grain of morphia daily, it ranges from two and one-half to twenty dollars. Patients are urged to procure a "full course," several month's supply, in the outset, the reward for which is a more or less generous (?) reduction in the cost of the nostrum, and—though this is not very explicitly stated—a larger stock of shekels to the credit of the vendor.

The mock honesty of some of these charlatans is amusing. One writes: "I do not advertise or send out circulars, as there are hundreds of quacks who are doing such low

and mean work. I have become disgusted!" Another—Stephens—says: "I am aware that there are heartless impostors, destitute alike of position and principle, who are constantly endeavoring to entrap and victimize the anxious, and perhaps too credulous sufferer. The cunningly devised spurious recommendations of these swindlers are well calculated to deceive the unwary. *You will most certainly be swindled by trusting to their representations!*" Still another—Kane—speaking of the so-called "treatment" which he in common with others adopts, says, with an outburst of indignant virtue, it is "practised so shamelessly and heartlessly by charlatans in various Western and Southern States. It is very rarely successful." And again: "Another matter in this connection needs attention, viz.: the lying pretensions of a few charlatans who, by specious advertisements and deceitful lies, induce the victims to these habits to buy their medicines or come under their care for treatment. These sharpers are utterly without conscience, and do not scruple to prey upon and undermine the health of their victims in order to gain a few dollars!" and elsewhere he bewailingly remarks: "As I have before said, I cannot sufficiently deplore the action of those unscrupulous men who prey upon victims of the habit under the guise of physicians. These quacks are utterly without conscience, without a jot or tittle of honesty or honor, and go on bleeding their patients pecuniarily, from day to day, while deluding them with lying assertions and holding out false hopes!"

Some of the nostrums are nothing but disguised solutions of morphia. Several years ago-

the writer read a paper on this topic before the Kings County Medical Society, and among the specimens presented one analysis, made by a competent chemist resulted.

Water.....	28.66.
Glycerine.....	66 89.
Morphia.....	4.45.
	<hr/>
	100.00.

The coloring was aniline. Others may contain quinine, strychnine, cannabis, atropia, hyoscyamia or other ingredient; but be the mixture what it may, the prospect of failure is vastly greater than that of success. For obvious reasons, no record of this appears in the array of reputed proof put forth by these pretenders. That is not in keeping with their assertions. The vast volume of failures is a sealed book of blasted hopes and vain endeavor.

Through the kindness of Dr. Samuel W. Abbott, Health Officer and Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Health, whose courtesy is herewith admitted, the writer quotes from the last—1886—official report of that gentleman as follows:

“One of the most evident proofs of an increase in the consumption of opium is the existence and growth of a considerable number of so-called ‘cures’ or ‘antidotes’ for the opium habit. These preparations are advertised broadcast in the public prints, and occasionally in professional journals, which should serve a better purpose. If these so-called cures were of a similar composition to the great mass of empirical remedies, but little harm would result from their use. This is not the case, however, with the preparations in question. With but one

exception, the active ingredient in the so-called cures examined by the analyst proved to be opium itself in one or another of its varied forms. The preparations of this character enumerated in the analyst's report were obtained, in all instances, either directly from the proprietors or from their authorized agents, and were accompanied with their published circulars.

"The purchaser of such preparations thus becomes the victim of a cruel fraud, under the supposition that he is obtaining a remedy or antidote, the article which he receives being simply the enemy in disguise against which he is bending his energies to obtain relief. This shameful practice deserves nothing but the severest condemnation. To the credit of Massachusetts, but few, if any, of the preparations are made within its limits."

"There is one notable exception to the above statement as to the presence of opium in these 'cures,' and that is the chloride of gold cure, a preparation sold at an exorbitant price, doubtless in consequence of its alleged precious component. Reference to the analyst's statement, however, shows that this article contains not even a trace of that precious metal. Further comment upon this fraud is needless."

"The circulars referred to as accompanying the 'cures' are omitted from this report. It is sufficient to say that their style is remarkably similar in their methods of securing and fleecing their victims, each one accusing the others of fraud, and publishing as endorsements the names of many prominent persons in various parts of the country. We have sufficient proof that in many instances such names were pub-

lished without the least shadow of authority."

The nostrum samples we secured were examined by Dr. B. F. Davenport, State Analyst of the Massachusetts Board, and his report is appended :

" S. W. ABBOTT, M. D., HEALTH OFFICER :

" *Dear Sir* :—I have to report upon twenty samples of so-called opium cures which have been obtained from their proprietors. They have all been tested for the presence of morphine, and they have all responded to the usual reaction therefor, except the 'Keeley's Double Chloride of Gold Cure.' This one however, gave no reaction for the presence of even a trace of gold therein.

"The 'cures' were all uniformly obtained as for one who had acquired the habit of taking the, for an opium-eater, very moderate quantity of only one grain of morphine per day. It was expected, as proved to be the case, that the 'cures' for even such a mild case would contain enough morphine to furnish unmistakable evidence of its presence, if they contained any at all. The twenty varieties of 'cures' were as follows :

S. B. Collins, La Porte, Ind.

Mrs. J. A. Drollinger, La Porte, Ind.

W. B. Squire, Worthington, Ind.

P. B. Bowser, Logansport, Ind.

J. C. Beck, Cincinnati, Ohio.

J. L. Stephens, Lebanon, Ohio.

H. L. Baker, Toledo, Ohio.

J. S. Carleton, Chicago, Ill.

L. Meeker, Chicago, Ill.

Wm. P. Phelon, Chicago, Ill.

L. E. Keeley, Dwight, Ill.

H. H. Kane, New York City.
 Chas. C. Beers, New York City.
 Salvo Remedy Co., New York City.
 F. E. Marsh, Quincy, Mich.
 B. S. Dispensary, Berrien Springs, Mich.
 B. M. Woolley, Atlanta, Ga.
 Geo. A. Bradford, Columbus, Ga.
 J. C. Hoffman, Jefferson, Wis.
 Jos. A. Dunn, Elizabeth, N. J.

Respectfully submitted.

B. F. DAVENPORT."

Since the above was written, new "Richards" have entered the field, and in order that no member of this "community" may be slighted in this exposé, we obtained specimens of their "wares" and submitted them to Dr. E. H. Bartley, Prof. of Chemistry in the Long Island College Hospital, and Chemist-in-Chief to the Brooklyn Board of Health, with the following result:

FEBRUARY 22, 1887.

Dear Doctor:—I have examined the preparations you left with me, and find morphia in those marked, as follows:

C. J. Weatherby, Kansas City, Mo.
 A. S. Woolley, Selma, Ala.
 F. W. Eldred, Chicago, Ill.
 J. J. Holden, Williamsburg, Ohio.

Yours, very truly,

E. H. BARTLEY, M.D.

No comment. He who runs may read.